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Statement on Governor Wolf's Budget Address

Deborah Gordon Klehr, executive director of the Education Law Center, issued this statement following Governor Tom Wolf's budget address today:

“We are pleased to see Governor Wolf's proposed increases in state funding for basic education, special education, early education, and career and technical education in next year's budget. But while these increases in funding will help Pennsylvania students, it will take much more significant investments to close our state's longstanding resource gaps. Our children need and deserve action from our elected officials to remedy the inequity and inadequacy of Pennsylvania's broken school funding system.

“Studies have shown that the state is at least \$3 billion short of providing what districts across Pennsylvania actually need to educate their students adequately. Pennsylvania ranks 47th among states in the portion of school spending funded by the state, according to the latest available census data. Relatedly, the state has the largest gap in the nation between what our poorest and wealthiest districts spend on education.

“While Pennsylvania now has a funding formula designed to allocate aid to districts on the basis of actual student and district need, only \$453 million of \$5.995 billion in state basic education aid is currently distributed through that formula – 7.6 percent of the total aid. A \$100 million boost in aid through the formula will mean that still only 9 percent of basic education aid is allocated through a needs-based formula.

“To chart a new course, the governor and legislature must commit to substantial increases in state aid to close persistent adequacy gaps and eliminate unconscionable disparities across districts. We will continue to work with the governor and the General Assembly to ensure that the state budget reflects Pennsylvanians' priorities and the needs of our students. We will also continue to press our claims in court, in which we challenge the failure of our state government officials to comply with their constitutional obligations to adequately and more equitably fund our schools.”